The Governor Question

A Case Study in Turkish Cypriot Political Contradictions

Documentation Report

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Executive Summary

During his term as President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Mustafa Akıncı's proposal to appoint a Turkish Cypriot as Governor of the Central Bank was rejected by the CTP-led coalition government. Despite campaigning on platforms of "self-governance" and claiming Turkish Cypriots have "many qualified people," the coalition chose to retain the existing governance structure. When questioned publicly, party leaders have provided contradictory explanations or remained silent. This report documents this incident as a revealing case study of the gap between political rhetoric and practice in Turkish Cypriot politics.

The Incident

According to public testimony at a political debate, President Akıncı proposed appointing a Turkish Cypriot citizen to head the Central Bank during the four-party coalition government (CTP, TDP, DP, HP). When initially questioned about this at this event, CTP leader Tufan Erhürman first denied such a proposal existed, stating "öyle bir şey olmadı" (no such thing happened). However, when pressed further, he changed his position, admitting that the cabinet had discussed the matter and decided to retain the existing governor because they deemed him competent.

This shift from denial to admission raises critical questions. The decision represents a deliberate choice by parties claiming to champion Turkish Cypriot self-determination to maintain external appointment patterns in their most critical financial institution. TDP leader Cemal Özyiğit, present at these discussions as a coalition partner, has remained notably silent on the matter despite public calls for clarification.

Most tellingly, Mustafa Akıncı, now campaigning for CTP despite having his proposal rejected by them, has blamed Turkey for the absence of Turkish Cypriots in leadership positions—the very positions his CTP allies voted against filling with Turkish Cypriots.

The Broader Context

The Central Bank governorship represents more than an administrative position—it symbolises economic sovereignty. The systematic exclusion of Turkish Cypriots from their own financial institutions reveals an acceptance of structural dependency that contradicts claims of pursuing self-governance. This is not a recent phenomenon but a pattern that has worsened over time, as evidenced by the reduction of Turkish Cypriot deputy positions in 2007 and the rejection of a Turkish Cypriot governor in 2020. Both happened during CTP-led coalitions.

This pattern of diminishing representation extends beyond the Central Bank. Turkish Cypriots report systematic exclusion from leadership positions across multiple institutions. The same political leaders who oversee these internal barriers vocally protest when Turkish Cypriots face exclusion in international forums. They demand recognition and equality from Greece, Turkey and Republic of Cyprus while simultaneously reducing their own citizens' access to leadership positions within their own territory.

This creates a documented contradiction: while claiming discrimination when excluded externally, these leaders have presided over measurable reductions in Turkish Cypriot representation internally. How can one credibly demand external recognition while accepting—and in some cases implementing—the reduction of local participation in governance? The numbers tell a clear story: fewer Turkish Cypriots in positions of authority today than twenty years ago, despite decades of rhetoric about self-determination.

The Pattern of Non-Response

Since 2022, direct questions about this decision have been posed publicly through social media and public forums. These questions include: "Why can't Turkish Cypriots head the Central Bank?" and "If you believe we have qualified people, why not appoint them?" The responses have followed a revealing pattern:

- **Philosophical deflection:** Essays about "beautiful incompleteness" and how "ambiguity is good"
- **Blame shifting:** Attributing the situation to Turkey despite the decision being made by the local government
- **Strategic silence:** Complete non-engagement from key decision-makers

The Erosion of Representation: A Historical Pattern

According to individuals familiar with the Central Bank's internal structure, Turkish Cypriot representation in senior leadership has systematically decreased over time. Prior to 2007, while the Governor position was filled by appointment from Turkey, both Deputy Governor positions were held by Turkish Cypriots, ensuring significant local representation in the bank's management.

In 2007, this structure changed. One of the two Deputy Governor positions previously held by Turkish Cypriots was reassigned to an appointee from Turkey. This reduction—from two Turkish Cypriot deputies to one—represents a 50% decrease in local representation at the senior management level. According to sources with direct knowledge of these appointments, this change occurred during a period of CTP governance.

This historical context adds another dimension to the 2020 rejection of Akıncı's proposal. Not only did the CTP-led coalition refuse to appoint a Turkish Cypriot as Governor, but they did so against a backdrop of already-diminished representation that their party had previously accepted. The pattern suggests not a single decision but a consistent policy of accepting reduced Turkish Cypriot participation in the governance of their own financial institutions.

When political leaders claim to champion "self-governance" while presiding over—and later defending—the reduction of local representation in key institutions, the gap between rhetoric and action becomes measurable in concrete terms: fewer Turkish Cypriots in positions of authority within their own Central Bank.

The Fundamental Contradiction

The core issue is not technical competence but political will. When CTP states "this community has many qualified people" while simultaneously blocking those same people from leadership positions, they

reveal a fundamental contradiction in their political philosophy. They demand recognition as equals from external powers while denying equality within their own institutions. They speak of self-governance while maintaining governance structures that exclude self.

Implications and Conclusion

This incident is not merely historical; it illuminates present political choices. The same parties and leaders who made this decision now campaign on platforms of "hope" and "change." Yet they have never explained why they blocked Turkish Cypriot leadership of the Central Bank, nor have they committed to changing this practice if elected.

The silence surrounding these questions is itself an answer. Political leaders who cannot explain why they prevented their own citizens from leading their own institutions reveal that discrimination is not only external but internal, not only imposed but chosen. Until this question receives an honest answer, claims of pursuing genuine self-governance remain rhetorical devices rather than sincere political commitments. The real test of political integrity is not what leaders say about discrimination by others, but what they do when they hold the power to discriminate themselves.

Note: This report is based on public statements, media coverage, and documented public exchanges. All parties mentioned have been given multiple opportunities to respond to these questions through public channels.